

520 Plaza Rubio St

Designation Status: Structure of Merit

Assessor Parcel Number: 025-282-003

Constructed: 1951

Property Description:

Designer R. B. Nelson designed the single story, L-shaped, stucco clad house in a post-World War II, Spanish Colonial Revival style. It features a moderately pitched intersecting gable roof, with the side gable roof as the dominant roofline. The roof is clad in terra cotta tiles. An open porch, sheltered by the projecting roof, runs the length of the side gabled component of the house. The porch roof is supported by wood posts. Fenestration is of a combination of wood framed double hung sash, casement, and fixed single paned windows. A stuccoed chimney is located on the south elevation. A driveway leads to the detached garage on the north side of the house.



Architect: R. B. Nelson (designer)

Architectural Style: Spanish Colonial Revival

Property Type: Single Family Residence

Original Use: Single Family Residence

Significance: The City of Santa Barbara establishes historic significance as provided by the Municipal Code, Section 22.22.040. Any historic building that meets one or more of the eleven criteria established for a City Landmark or a City Structure of Merit can be considered significant. On January 29, 2014, the Historic Landmarks Commission voted to add the property to the

Potential Historic Resources List based on the finding of the Lower Riviera Survey that found the building is eligible to be designated a Structure of Merit and is a contributing historic resource to the proposed Mission Gardens Historic District. It is the opinion of the Historic Landmarks Commission Designation Subcommittee that the building at 520 Plaza Rubio is an excellent candidate for Structure of Merit designation per the following two criteria:

Criterion D. Its exemplification of a particular architectural style or way of life important to the City, the State, or the Nation

R. B. Nelson designed the house in 1951 for G.L. Giddings in a post-World War II, Spanish Colonial Revival style. The house is compatible with the neighboring historically significant houses on the street that Mary McLaughlin Craig and George Washington Smith designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style in the 1920s when the City deliberately transformed its architecture and look from an ordinary western style town into a romantic Spanish Colonial Revival/ Mediterranean style city.

This transformation was the result of the planning vision of a number of Santa Barbara citizens in the early 1920s with the founding of the Santa Barbara Community Arts Association, which urged that the town to identify its individual character and then use planning principles to develop it. The house is an example of an effort after World War II to continue the tradition to design the city in unique Spanish Colonial Revival style even after the popular architectural styles of the nation were now turning to the simplified ranch and mid-century styles. The house stands on an important location on Plaza Rubio across from the Old Mission Santa Barbara and Rose Garden alongside the important collection of Spanish Colonial Revival styles homes. It is significant that the R. B. Nelson designed the house to be compatible with this collection and not in the new popular styles being constructed throughout other areas of Santa Barbara as it contributes to the significance of the streetscape.

The building exemplifies the Spanish Colonial Revival style which emphasizes the interplay of cubic volumes, patios, pergolas, and verandas; each interpreted and redefined by local architects or regions in their own oeuvre of the form, massing, and decorative treatments. Santa Barbara has



examples of the Spanish Colonial Revival style throughout the city from the distinct commercial buildings on State Street, to large homes and estates on the Riviera, to multi-family housing and hotels in the West Beach neighborhood along the waterfront.

The house features the following character defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival Style:

- The terra-cotta tiles covering the cross-gabled roof, which has one front-facing gable and one side facing gable.
- The emphasis on the terra cotta tile that create a decorative edge from the roof to the smooth stucco white walls.
- A vent in peak of the front facing gable
- Heavy wood rafters under the front porch roof and under the eaves.
- The wood panel entry door expressing solidity.
- Wood, true divided light casement and double hung windows.



Criterion G. Its embodiment of elements demonstrating outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, materials and craftsmanship

The building demonstrates outstanding materials in the terra cotta tiled roof and wood, true divided light windows. The residence also demonstrates outstanding attention to design featuring Spanish Colonial Revival elements such as the cross gable roof, heavy wood porch posts and rafters, terra cotta tiled roof and the smooth stucco walls.

Historic Integrity: The residence is in good condition, with almost all of the original materials still present. The building retains enough of its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, allowing it to convey its original appearance. The house also contributes to the visual integrity of the neighborhood that has maintained much of its historic integrity with intact small homes from the 1920s.



Vicinity Map of 520 Plaza Rubio



Designation boundary is entire parcel to allow for HLC review for compatibility